The question of making appointments in the Fisheries and Co-operative Departments from among educated fisher-folk will be considered.

The representation of members of your community in the Council and in the Assembly must await the new Rules and the new constitution.

148. Disabilities of Ezhavas.

MR. M. S. ANIRUDHAN (*Municipal Council, Alleppey*) said that the Ezhava community in the State formed nearly one fifth of her population and that their standard of education and culture equalled that of any other community in the State. They contributed the biggest share to the State exchequer and national wealth. In the commercial and industrial development of the State, they played no insignificant part. The community was solely responsible for the promotion of the *coir* industry of the State, the annual export value derived from which amounted to over two crores of rupees. Nearly three crores of rupees worth of paddy and rice were imported every year for consumption in the State. The community could therefore claim that they provided the means for nearly two-thirds of the staple food imported for the people of Travancore. In the words of the late Deawn Mr. M. E. Watts, "the Ezhavas were entitled to special consideration and gratitude of all Travancore" on this account. But it was regrettable that such an important community was subjected to certain civic disabilities. The chief among them was the restriction placed on them in regard to the use of the public roads. The circumstances under which the Vaikam *satyagraha* was started were fresh in the memory of all. Even the judiciary was unsympathetic towards the community as would be seen from 5 T. L. R., page 93, where an invidious distinction was made between King's highways and *gramaveethies*. It was high time that this ruling was set aside by legislation. Ever since the inauguration of the Assembly the representatives of the community had been clamouring for throwing open all the public roads in the State to all the communities. But the Government contented by saying that there were only a few miles of such roads. The real question for decision was not about the length of such roads, but whether there was an interference with the enjoyment of civic rights and privileges by all communities.

In the case of schools also the members of the community were subject to the same disability. It was highly regrettable to find that as many as twelve Government educational institutions were not thrown open to all classes of people. Two of these institutions were in the capital itself. Similarly, there were many public tanks, wells and *satrams*, not open to the depressed classes. A resolution had been passed two years back by the Legislative Council urging on the Government the need for throwing open all public tanks, wells, *satrams* and roads for the use of all sections of the people. But the Government did not take any steps to give effect to this resolution.

Another disability which the members of the community were subjected to was the inadequate representation of the community in

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the public service. It was twenty-five years since the Government had formally recognised the claims of depressed class communities for admission to the public service. But due to the unsympathetic attitude of the heads of the departments in whom the powers of appointment were vested, the grievances of the community in the matter still remained unredressed. The Ezhava community was not adequately represented in any branch of the public service. In the Excise Department, the major portion of the revenue of which was contributed by the members of the community, Ezhavas were poorly represented. No doubt a member of the community was appointed recently as the head of the department. But this was not sufficient. There was not a single Ezhava among the 12 Assistant Commissioners in the department. Of the 15 First Grade Inspectors, only one was an Ezhava, and among the 42 Second Grade Inspectors there were only three Ezhavas. Among the lower ranks of the department also the community was poorly represented. These facts should weigh with the Government when future appointments were made in the department. In the Judicial Department also the community was inadequately represented. Of the 40 District Munsiffs, there was only one Ezhava and he held only a temporary place. Again, among the 15 Judges, only one was an Ezhava. In the ministerial staff of the High Court, from whom 50 per cent. of the Munsiffs were recruited, there were no Ezhavas. Applications for appointment from the members of the community should be given preference for appointment in the department. The community was equally unrepresented in all the other departments of the public service. This state of affairs should be improved.

Lastly, the member spoke about the representation of the community in the Legislative Council and in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. Under the existing Electoral Rules no Ezhava candidate could aspire to be returned from any of the general constituencies. In view of the high property qualification for exercising the franchise the community could not command any of the electorates. The practice of nominating members was unsatisfactory. This system should be done away with and special electorates or joint electorates with a reservation of seats for the community should be established. The Electoral Rules should be modified accordingly. The principle of communal representation as an effective measure to safeguard the interests of the unrepresented communities had been accepted by the Round Table Conference. Even under the Indian constitution, seats were reserved for unrepresented communities in British India. In the neighbouring State of Cochin, there were two special constituencies for the Ezhavas, without prejudice to their right to contest the general constituencies. Even in Travancore special constituencies were given to the *jenmies*, planters and the mercantile community. The same concession should be extended to the Ezhavas also. For the Assembly also, the system of nomination should be put a stop to and special provision should be made to enable the community to return their own representatives. This question should receive the sympathetic attention of the Government when the reconstitution of the Assembly was effected.

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